

5 Easy Steps for Leading Book Discussions

Excerpted from Reading Group Choices
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1 Acknowledge your role as “facilitator”—not expert.

If it's your turn to lead the discussion, know that you are not expected to be an authority or expert on the chosen book. Your primary tasks are to open the discussion, keep it going, maintain a lively dialogue, and end the discussion on time. A great book discussion is the result of the thoughts and perceptions of a variety of different people.

2 Note your own response as you read.

Make notes as you read the book, highlighting or marking passages. What are your reactions, questions or insights? Add the personal touch to your discussion. Share your thoughts during your discussions and invite others to comment.

3 Lay some ground rules.

After you've introduced yourself to the group, remind members of the ways they can contribute to the discussion:

- Avoid “crosstalk” or talking over others.
- Be respectful. Keep an open mind.
- Try not to repeat what others have said. Speak up with something new or add to the previous comment.
- Acknowledge that there is no right or wrong, just differences of opinion.
- Be open to learn from others.
- If you are outgoing, be careful to allow space for others to share their thoughts.

4 Call the question.

If you feel the group has begun to repeat itself, acknowledge your observation, ask for agreement if necessary, and pose a new topic.

5 Balance the discussion.

Invite quiet members to share their thoughts. Watch for introverts who have something to say but are having a hard time getting in a word.

Praise for *For the Sake of Peace*

“In an engaging intersection of politics and spirituality, Ikeda’s Buddhist perspective of compassion and the interconnectedness of all life infuse this work, creating a bridge to peace for all walks of life, all nations, and all creeds.”

—NAPRA ReView

“A passionate, intelligent plea for mindfulness in both individual and societal action.”

—ForeWord Magazine

“Any individual who has questioned whether he or she could actually make a difference should read this book, become inspired and walk the path of peace.”

—David Krieger, President,
Nuclear Age Peace Foundation

Host a Reading Group

Reading group discussions—in your home, at a bookstore or in a library—are great opportunities to learn something new, see things in a new way, examine deeply held beliefs or simply to enjoy the company of other book lovers. Middleway Press is happy to provide this discussion guide, which gives you everything you need to host a successful meeting: a descriptive summary, topics to consider, endorsements and hosting tips.

For more copies of this guide, or guides for other great Middleway Press books, contact us at:

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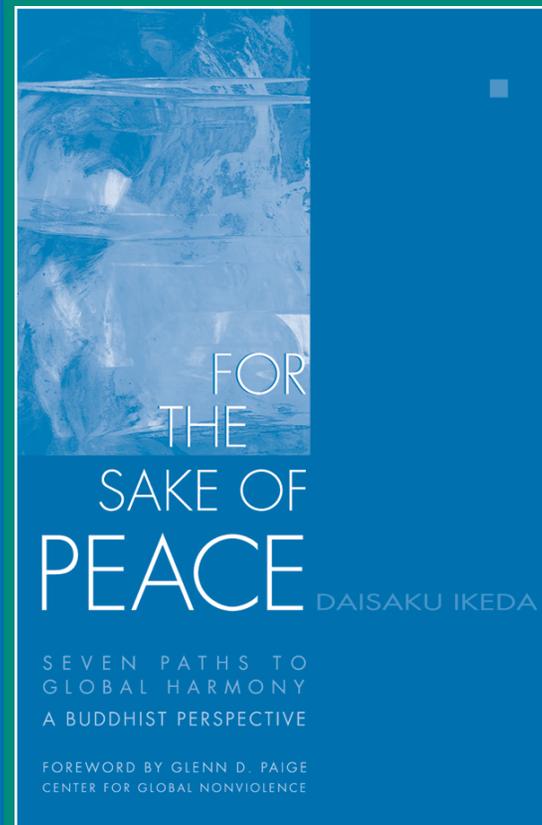
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DISCUSSION GUIDE



For the Sake of Peace: Seven Paths to Global Harmony

By Daisaku Ikeda



About the Book

The lives of people everywhere were touched by the events in the United States on September 11. Although war, hate, hunger, and terrorism are hardly new to the world, there has been a renewed interest in what it might take to achieve peace across the globe. If you've ever wondered how such a lofty goal could be attained, and how one can make a difference, this book offers insights, information and wisdom to give readers hope that things can be better.

Drawn from the author's 25+ years of university work and involvement with the United Nations, *For the Sake of Peace: Seven Paths to Global Harmony* addresses the issue of peace from the perspectives of compassion, the interconnectedness of all life and the absolute respect for human life—principles of Buddhist thought. With an understanding of the mistakes of the past, a clear picture of the emotions and issues that have evolved, and a compassionate message about the possibilities for the future, Dr. Ikeda offers us seven paths to peace—from self-mastery and dialogue to global awareness and disarmament—that will help us overcome major obstacles to the well-being of people everywhere.

Now in Paperback

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About the Author

Daisaku Ikeda has traveled to more than 50 countries meeting and holding dialogues with people, sharing what he has learned with the United Nations and working to make a difference through Soka Gakkai International, one of the most dynamic international Buddhist movements in the world today.

Dr. Ikeda is the founder of numerous cultural and educational institutes throughout the world. He has written more than 200 books that have been translated into several languages, and has worked tirelessly for international cultural exchange and the establishment of world peace.

TOPICS TO CONSIDER

- 1 In the book's preface, Dr. Ikeda tells the story of a Japanese soldier who describes his experience in war with the comment, "The Japanese army is too cruel for words." (hardcover: p. xvii, paperback: p. xix) Have people you've known experienced war firsthand? Were they able to share what they experienced? Although difficult for most to tell and to hear, discuss the importance of those stories to a society.
- 2 Since the end of the Cold War in 1989, a time when many felt hopeful for the future, more than fifty nations have been in violent conflicts and millions of lives have been claimed. What were your thoughts about the prospects for world peace at that time? Did they change after September 11? Have those thoughts changed after reading *For the Sake of Peace*?
- 3 Dr. Ikeda states, "Communist regimes toppled because for too long they sought enemies outside of themselves, not attempting to see the evils they harbored within." (p. 19) Discuss possible evils that may prevent your country from achieving its potential as it relates to global harmony.
- 4 Dialogue is one of the critical steps toward peace, according to Dr. Ikeda. Is there ever a case where dialogue should be halted as a peace-keeping strategy?
- 5 Dr. Ikeda suggests that there are times when, "to break the grip of arrogance, speech must be like the breath of fire." (p. 60) How might your upbringing have influenced the kind of dialogue with which you feel most comfortable—or, most threatened?
- 6 Central to progress in achieving world peace is an understanding of some of the underlying causes of hate and violence. How conscious are your government officials of the need for understanding root causes of conflict? Based on your country's policies and actions, discuss how your government views its role as a world citizen. Does this view differ from that of the people themselves?
- 7 Dr. Ikeda says this is a time "to vie with one another not for power or money but for achievement of humanitarian goals" (p. 73). He states, "Although competition originally meant 'seeking together,' it has come to denote defeating or triumphing over others." (p. 74) Is the pendulum swinging back? How have your own views of competition vs. cooperation changed as you've grown older?
- 8 Do you agree with the theory that "a borderless economy results in homogenization and a standardized consumer culture?" (p. 78) Is it possible for countries to open their borders to corporations with a global "brand" and still retain their identity? Discuss what you've observed about the strength of cultural identity during your travels to different countries.
- 9 If, as the author suggests, "the United States represents global society in miniature and foreshadows, for better or worse, the humanity of tomorrow (p. 80)," what changes in the U.S. can help the world achieve harmony?
- 10 Some people suggest that public schools need to return to basics—reading, writing and arithmetic—and maintain the separation between church and state. Dr. Ikeda maintains that "learning to respect the dignity of the individual must be the cornerstone of education in relation to human rights." Should such a position be taught in public schools? What would be some perceived threats—and benefits?
- 11 Dr. Ikeda stresses that "We must resist the temptation to assign good exclusively to one side and evil to the other." (p. 115) What role does the news media play in polarizing issues—and people?
- 12 Many suggest that politicians create war and that if it were up to the people, we would avoid violent conflicts. What evidence supports this belief? What evidence disputes it? What is your personal belief?
- 13 Seven guidelines by which communities prosper are noted on page 145. How does your culture rate? How would you rate your own beliefs?
- 14 Challenging the motives of growth and the modern scientific-mechanistic worldview, Dr. Ikeda suggests that "modern humanity mistakes knowledge for wisdom and pleasure for happiness." (p. 165) Has this been true for you personally? For your family? For your workplace? In what ways have you worked to place "advancement" in proper perspective?
- 15 Dr. Ikeda presents various types of time—physical time, historical time and existential or life-time, living in the present. How is this distinction valuable to you?
- 16 Review and discuss the preamble of the World Citizens Charter that is presented on page 179. If "a peaceful future can only be created gradually, through the accumulated results of many talks and the slow but steady realization of each agreement (p. 191)," do you believe the people of the world can have the patience and fortitude needed? If it is up to the people to create lasting change, what steps can you take to be a part of this global effort?